DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 405 038 JC 970 148

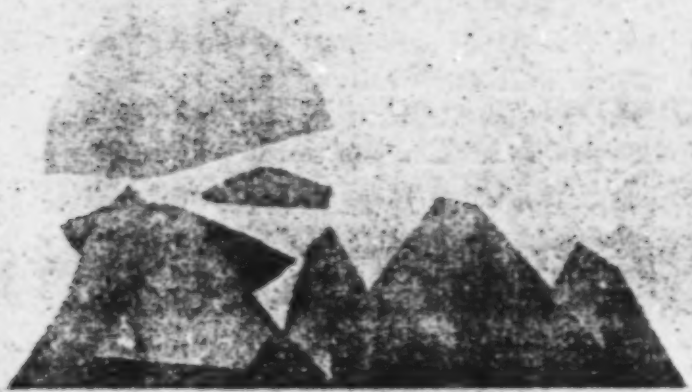
TITLE	Traditional Knowledge: An Implementation Workplan for Aurora College.
INSTITUTION	Aurora Coll., Fort Smith (Northwest Territories).
PUB DATE	Jun 96
NOTE	28p.; Printed on colored paper.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*American Indian Culture; American Indian Education; *Canada Natives; College Administration; Community Colleges; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Traits; *Educational Environment; Educational Facilities Improvement; Financial Support; Foreign Countries; *Organizational Development; *School Culture; Student Personnel Services; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS	Aurora College NT

ABSTRACT

Prepared as part of an effort to make Aurora College, in the Northwest Territories, Canada, more responsive to the Native American communities that form its primary student base, this plan outline strategies for infusing traditional knowledge into the college's day-to-day operations. Following introductory sections describing traditional knowledge and its role at Aurora College, the college's general vision for implementing traditional knowledge is described, suggesting that it will help provide students with a sense of ownership and belonging, establish a culturally dynamic atmosphere, and help students approach the contemporary world using the spirit and wisdom of their people. Next, specific initiatives are discussed for the following areas: (1) administration, including in-house activities to coordinate implementation and efforts to broaden the influence of traditional knowledge; (2) staff, including the development of a staff that reflects the population served and efforts to promote staff understanding of traditional knowledge; (3) programs, including efforts to enhance delivery, conduct research and evaluation, and form liaisons with communities and traditional knowledge holders; (4) facilities, including displays of First Nations art and culture on campus and the establishment of healing and counseling facilities; and (5) support services, such as library collections that include traditional knowledge materials and student support and wellness groups. Strategies for meeting challenges in implementing traditional knowledge are then presented with respect to funding, human resources, and logistics. Finally, an implementation schedule for 1996-97 to 1998-99 is presented. (HAA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 405 038



TRADITIONAL *Knowledge*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Gauthier

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

An Implementation Workplan For Aurora College

June, 1996

JC 970 148

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TRADITIONAL *Knowledge*

Johnny Neyelle making Dene drums and rattles.

Dene elders have said that the child is born grasping the drum. The child is holding in the palm of its hand the accumulated knowledge, skill, and perspectives of the Dene. The Drum ensures the continuation of the Dene as a people. The child becomes the community, and the community is the future of the people.

Dene Kede Curriculum

TRADITIONAL *Knowledge*

contents

Introduction 1

Background 2

Implementation 4

Vision 5

Initiatives

- Administration 10
- Administration Initiatives 11
- Staff 13
- Staff Initiatives 14
- Programs 16
- Program Initiatives 17
- Facilities 19
- Facilities Initiatives 20
- Support Services 21
- Services Inittiatives 23

Meeting the Challenges 24

- Meeting the Challenges 26

Conclusion 28

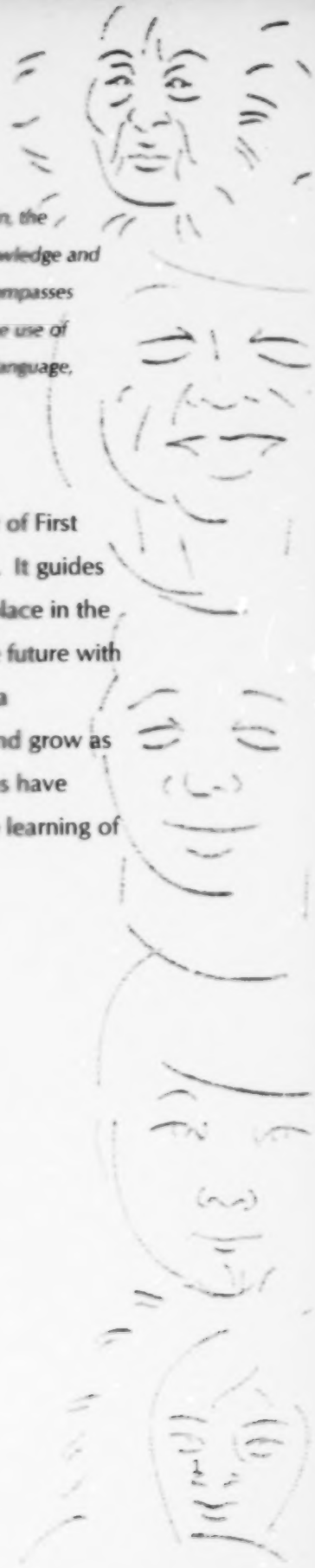
Implementation Schedule 29

traditional knowledge

Traditional Knowledge..... "knowledge that derives from, or is rooted in, the traditional way of life of aboriginal people. ... It is the accumulated knowledge and understanding of the human place in relation to the universe. This encompasses spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the use of natural resources, relationships between people and is reflected in the language, social organization, values, institutions and laws."

GNWT Traditional Knowledge Working Group

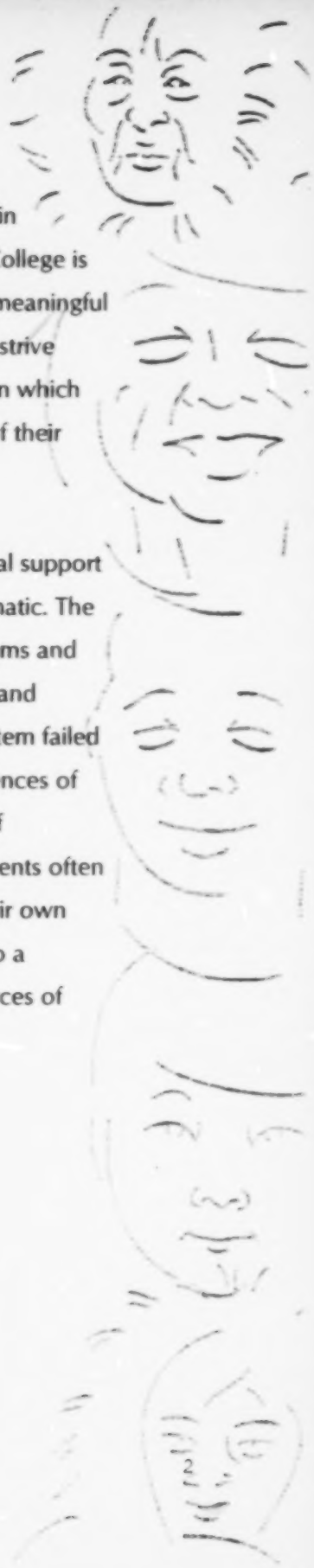
Traditional knowledge has shaped and defined the identity of First Nations individuals and communities through generations. It guides the young as they explore their environments and seek a place in the world. It enriches the present and lays a foundation for the future with cultural, social and spiritual values of the past. It provides a framework within which First Nations people live, learn, and grow as individuals and as a culture. Language, stories and customs have been handed down to guide communities and pass on the learning of the elders.



background

To better serve its students and First Nations partners, and in recognition of the value of traditional knowledge, Aurora College is committed to making traditional knowledge a vibrant and meaningful part of its day to day operations. The College continues to strive toward a richer and more culturally sensitive environment in which First Nations people can work and learn with the support of their culture and its values.

For many First Nations individuals, the move from traditional support structures to a formalized educational system proved traumatic. The separation from familiar values, relationships, learning systems and language tended to restrict, rather than promote, personal and intellectual development. Generally speaking, the new system failed to build on or extend the students' first educational experiences of language and learning. A common result was a lessening of individuals' confidence in his or her ability to succeed. Students often felt alienated from, and didn't appreciate, the values of their own culture. Feelings of personal failure at times developed into a frustration towards the systems that should have been sources of support.

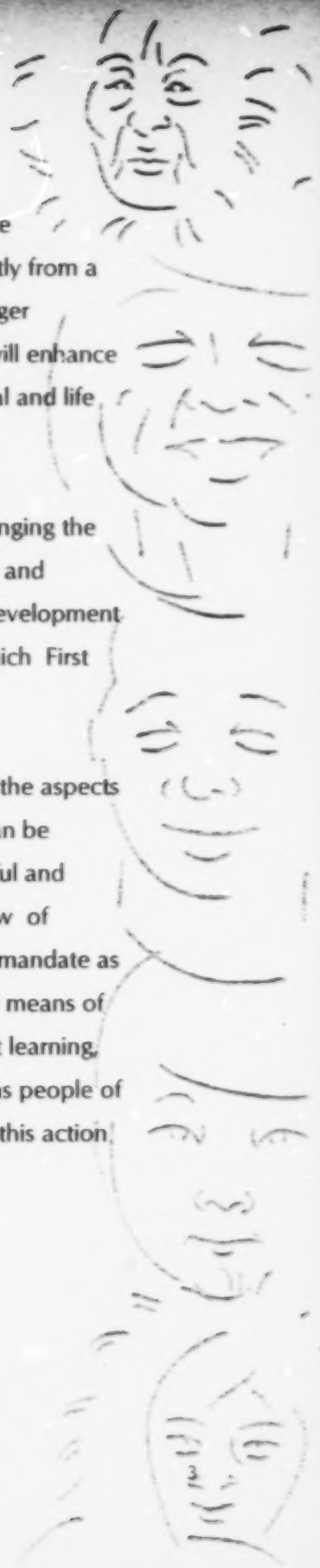


implementation

Many First Nations people who attend Aurora College have experienced this negative education and will prosper greatly from a more culturally sensitive environment. Working with stronger relationships to their Traditional Knowledge and heritage will enhance cultural pride and make it a foundation for their educational and life goals.

In order to meet this challenge, the College commits to bringing the GNWT Traditional Knowledge policy to life in its programs and services. The following workplan outlines the continued development of a culturally sensitive and supportive environment in which First Nations people can work and learn more effectively.

The definition of traditional knowledge is very general and the aspects of culture that it contains are very broad; not all of them can be incorporated into the Aurora College system in a meaningful and practical way. This work plan will specify the what and how of effective implementation in accordance with the College's mandate as an educational training institution. It will propose ways and means of incorporating traditional knowledge so as to better support learning, personal growth, and communication with the First Nations people of the North. The College wishes to develop and implement this action plan by targeting concrete results.



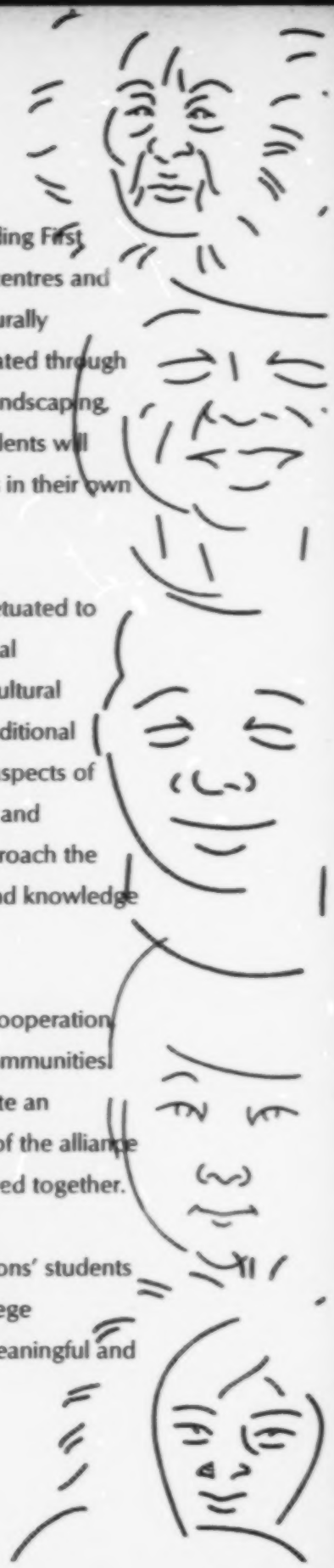
vision

Aurora College envisions a time when all students, including First Nations students, come into its' campuses and learning centres and experience a sense of ownership and belonging. A culturally dynamic atmosphere will exist. An ambiance will be created through the inclusion of culturally appropriate building designs, landscaping, artifacts, signage, displays and colours. First Nations students will receive a significant portion of their learning and services in their own language.

Traditional knowledge and values will be used and perpetuated to support learning and to become cornerstones for personal development. Highlighting the physical presentation of cultural heritage will illustrate the value placed on culture and traditional knowledge. Programs and services will include relevant aspects of Traditional Knowledge. Students will learn using modern and traditional equipment and methodologies. They will approach the contemporary world using the strength, spirit, wisdom and knowledge of their people.

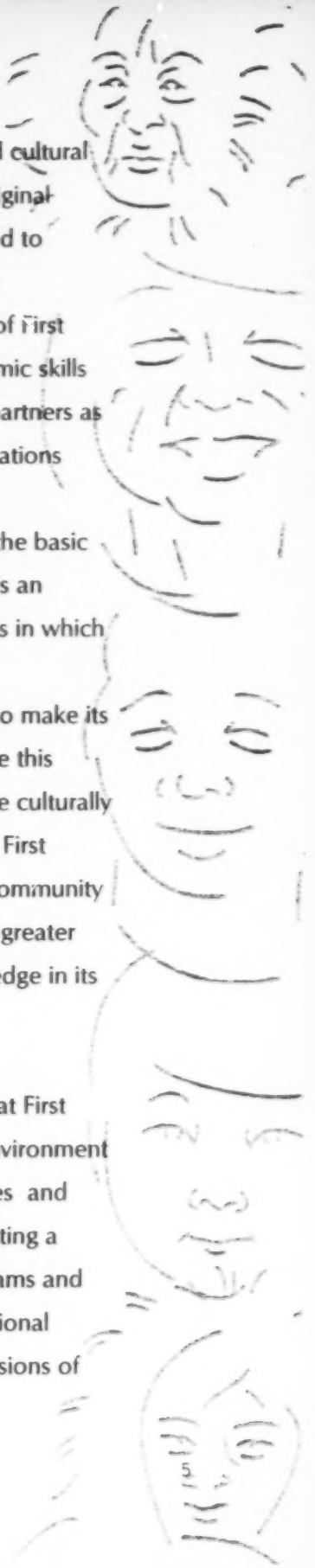
In this vision an alliance, based on mutual respect and cooperation, exists between Aurora College, the students and their communities. All work together, each learning from the others to create an environment in which everyone prospers. The strength of the alliance will shape and promote the successes that will be achieved together.

A greater sense of wellness will be possible for First Nations' students whether they attend community learning centers or College campuses. Traditional knowledge will be evident and meaningful and allow them to say, "I belong!"



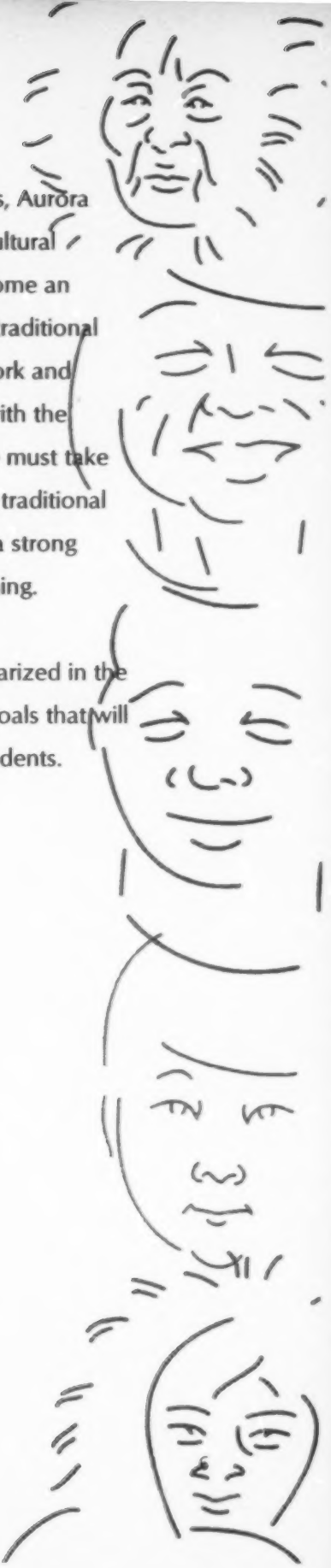
The vision includes First Nations communities, agencies and cultural associations with whom the College works to support aboriginal students. The College's administrative processes are adapted to include those aspects of traditional knowledge that support communication and understanding. There is increased use of First Nations languages and personnel. Personal, cultural, academic skills and information blend to support learning and enrich the partners as they grow in understanding and mutual respect. The First Nations people, their organizations, communities, the College, its administration and instructors work as a team to promote the basic values and richness of traditional knowledge. The College is an extension of the community and its traditional value systems in which the young aboriginal individuals first experienced learning.
Aurora College will implement a range of practical actions to make its programs and services more culturally sensitive and achieve this vision. It is essential that the plan to make the College more culturally sensitive and relevant has direct and continuous input from First Nations people. The College will solicit a high degree of community input in its planning and operational stages; this will ensure greater appreciation and practical application of Traditional Knowledge in its day to day operations.

The College will demonstrate its support for the concept that First Nations people learn and develop more effectively in an environment that celebrates the richness of their traditional culture, values and beliefs. In this document, the College commits to incorporating a significant component of traditional knowledge to its programs and services, to creating and displaying more examples of traditional artifacts, to taking part in and promoting ceremonial expressions of First Nations values and beliefs.

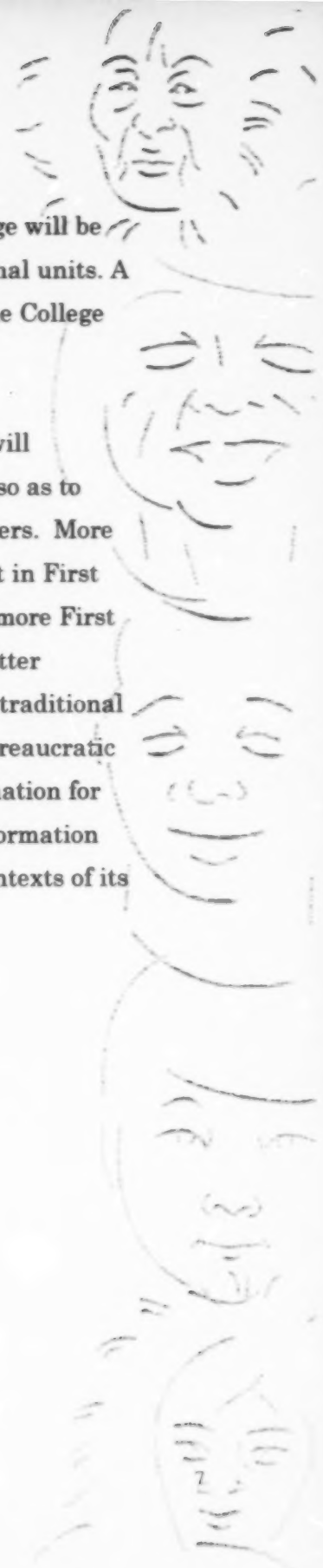


In order to better meet the needs of its aboriginal partners, Aurora College will increase and deepen relationships with the cultural communities of the NWT, reflect their lifestyles, and become an extension of those communities by showing the value of traditional knowledge in today's world. This will be done through work and consultation with the various aboriginal cultural groups, with the elders and youth - all the holders of traditional knowledge must take part in the process. A unified approach to implementing traditional knowledge in College programs and services will create a strong cultural environment for personal development and learning.

These commitments are keys to attaining the goals summarized in the following paragraphs. They will be practical, attainable goals that will mean success for Aurora College and its First Nations students.



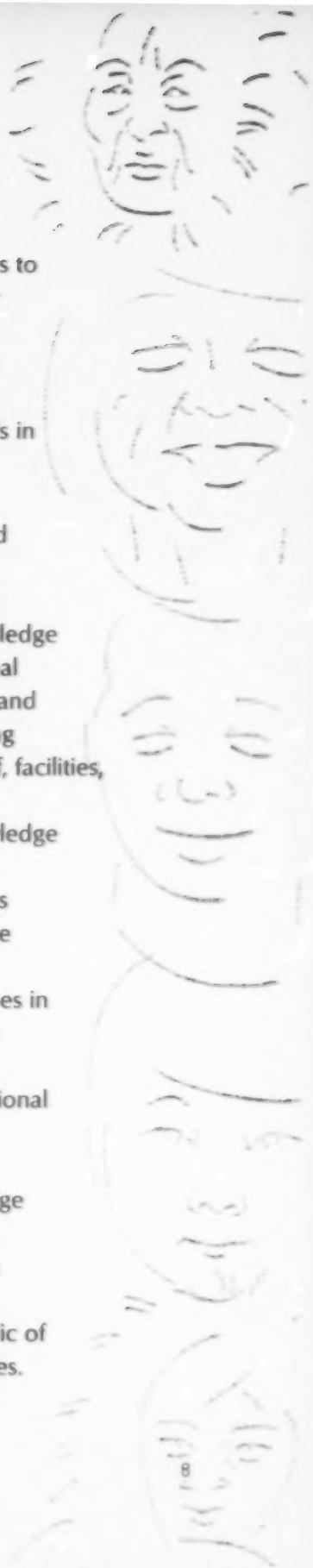
administration



Planning for greater inclusion of traditional knowledge will be done by breaking down College activities into functional units. A complete description of how each functional unit of the College will contribute to this goal is detailed below.

All levels of Aurora College administrative systems will implement relevant aspects of traditional knowledge so as to improve communications with its First Nations partners. More of the College's day to day business will be carried out in First Nations languages as well as in English. Recruiting more First Nations individuals to work in administration will better accommodate information to and from the holders of traditional knowledge. They will be able to explain and adapt bureaucratic processes and procedures and help clarify that information for which there is no direct translation from English. Information will be more useful and valuable when seen in the contexts of its original value systems.

administrative initiatives



Gather Information

- Enhance technology links with smaller communities to increase transfer of traditional knowledge to larger centers
- Enhance educational and social alliances with First Nations cultural organizations
- Consult with elders and youth to specify their needs in relation to traditional knowledge initiatives

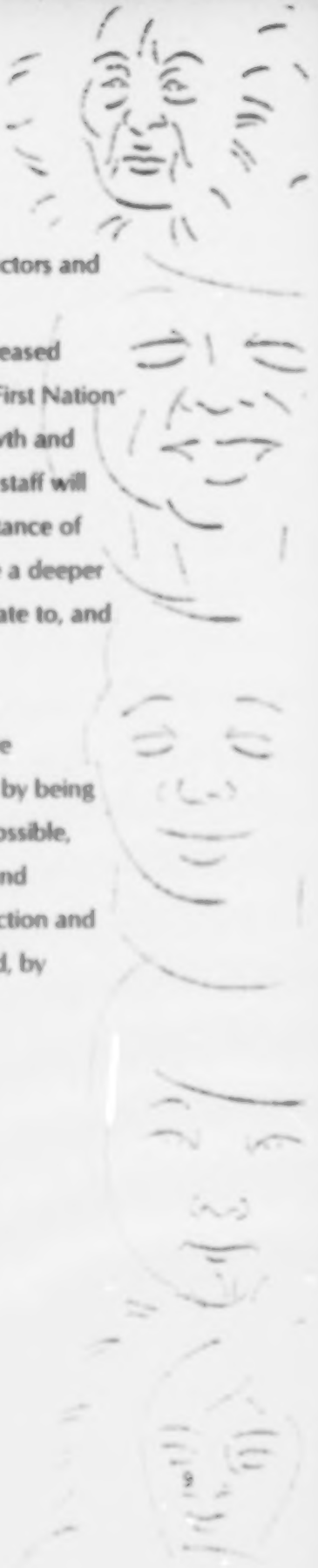
Establish In-house Activities

- Establish a coordinating committee to oversee and coordinate College use of traditional knowledge
- Increase the number of community level program deliveries and enhance the use of traditional knowledge
- Establish, develop, and maintain an active traditional knowledge definition that includes values, beliefs and spiritual relationships. Establish policies for including traditional knowledge into programs, services, staff, facilities, and administration
- Continually evaluate and improve traditional knowledge programs courses and services
- Establish an elders' council at each College campus
- Recognize outstanding initiatives which incorporate traditional knowledge into the College system
- Monitor and record the College's ongoing successes in implementing GNWT traditional knowledge policy
- Acknowledge that all College departments and employees are responsible for implementing traditional knowledge

Broaden the Scope of Influence

- Develop proposals for funding traditional knowledge courses and programs
- Negotiate transfer credit for programs and courses delivered by First Nations cultural agencies
- Undertake initiatives to inform and advise the public of potential benefits of traditional knowledge initiatives.

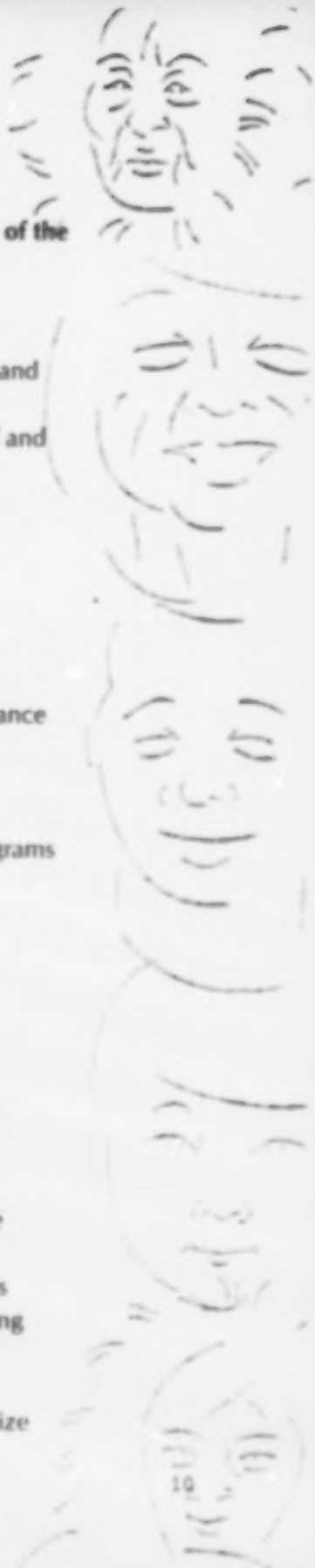
staff



Aurora College will help its staff grow in their roles as instructors and mentors by supporting initiatives and training related to implementation of traditional knowledge. As they gain increased understanding of the barriers, challenges and strengths of First Nation students, the staff will become better able to facilitate growth and learning. Continued professional development for current staff will increase their appreciation and understanding of the importance of Traditional Knowledge to student growth. This will promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of how traditional ways relate to, and meet the needs of, First Nations students.

Hiring policies will ensure that more First Nations people are employed to teach and complement traditional knowledge by being role models who embody traditional values. As much as possible, Aurora College staff will be representative of the students and communities it serves. The accent will be on quality instruction and relationships which are enriched, and in some cases defined, by traditional knowledge.

staffing initiatives



Continue Developing a Staff that is Representative of the Population it Serves

- Develop a clear plan to increase First Nation participation in College staff and administration
- Rewrite job descriptions to highlight knowledge and skills related to traditional knowledge
- Professionally develop existing First Nations staff and promote them to more senior positions
- Create in-service trainee positions
- Create more effective advertising to attract First Nations people into the College

Promote Staff Understanding of First Nations Heritage, Culture and Values

- Deliver traditional knowledge workshops to enhance all staff understanding of traditional knowledge
- Organize cultural camps for all staff
- Provide training that enhances the process of integrating traditional knowledge in College programs and services
- Provide opportunities for all staff to learn First Nations languages
- Provide staff with support and guidance in incorporating traditional knowledge in College services and programs
- Create ongoing planning partnerships with First Nation groups to facilitate traditional knowledge implementation
- Create exchange programs which allow staff to experience traditional knowledge in action at the community level
- Encourage and support staff participation in cross cultural awareness courses and community healing projects
- Facilitate communication between traditional knowledge holders and College staff to personalize staff appreciation of traditional knowledge

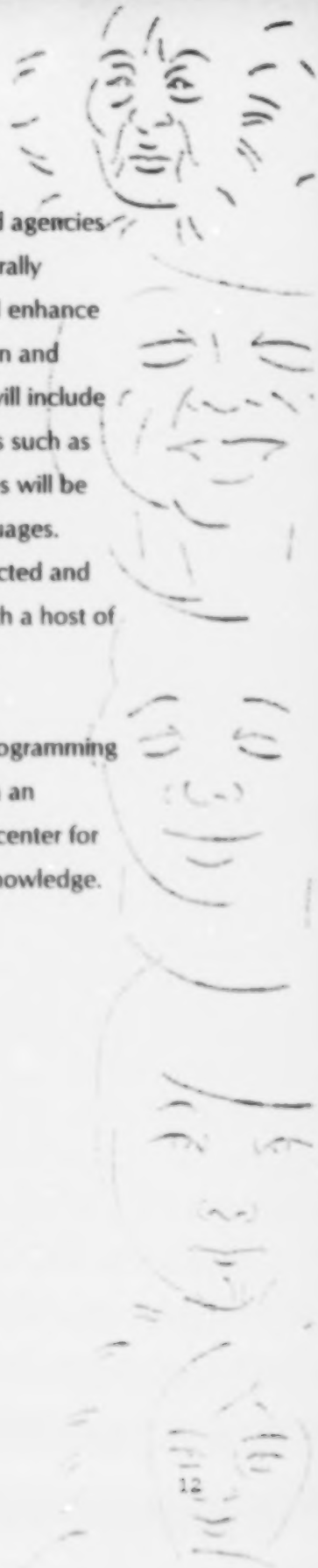
Implement Traditional Knowledge

- Hire trained staff capable of developing and delivering effective traditional knowledge programs
- Promote use of First Nation languages in the work place
- Provide second language pay increments for proficiency in First Nations languages
- Require instructors to use instructional methods that are cross-culturally effective

programs

Input from First Nation communities, cultural institutes and agencies is critical to the efficient development and delivery of culturally appropriate programming. To that end, Aurora College will enhance deliveries by infusing a wide range of traditional information and material into its deliveries. Programs' use of this material will include elders and community representatives taking part in classes such as those related to land claims issues. In addition, new courses will be delivered on topics such as First Nations cultures and languages. Detailed, relevant material for these programs will be collected and compiled by the College's Research Institute in concert with a host of First Nations resource people.

Traditional knowledge will enrich and enhance College programming to support learning among First Nations students. Through an integrated process, the College will become the Northern center for collecting, using and disseminating aspects of traditional knowledge.



program initiatives

Enhance Program Deliveries

- Increase use of traditional knowledge, where appropriate, in College deliveries.
- Recruit qualified aboriginal instructors to staff all areas of College programming
- Develop a guide book that outlines approaches to developing and delivering community based training
- Encourage third party clients to include traditional knowledge in the programs and services they purchase

Research and Evaluate

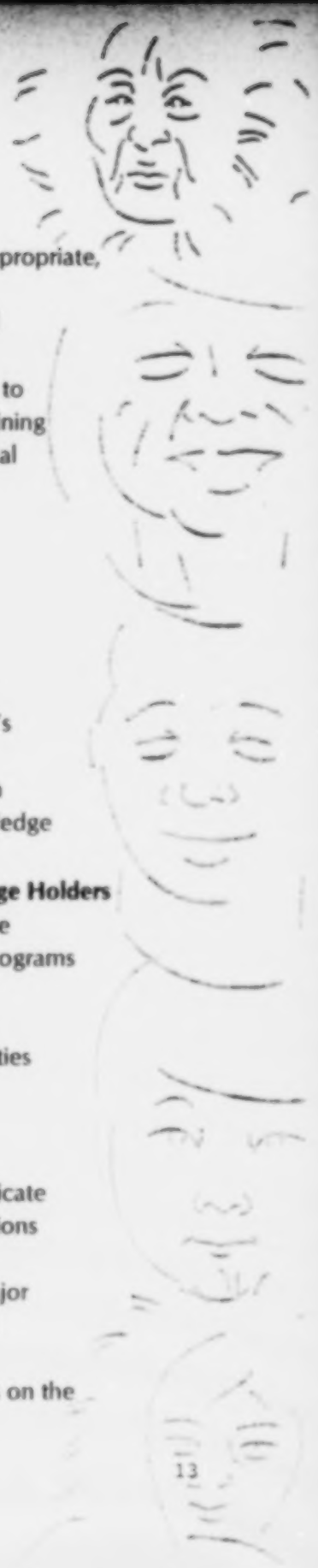
- Research & document traditional methods of developing skills and knowledge
- Through the Aurora Research Institute develop user friendly teaching kits based on the Institute's traditional knowledge research
- Create tools to evaluate the College's success in achieving its program goals for traditional knowledge

Liaise with Communities and Traditional Knowledge Holders

- Work with elders to create traditional knowledge modules to be included in a range of College programs
- Establish communications to ensure a College presence at community traditional celebrations
- Celebrate First Nation traditions in College facilities under the direction of students and elders

Adjust and Establish Programs

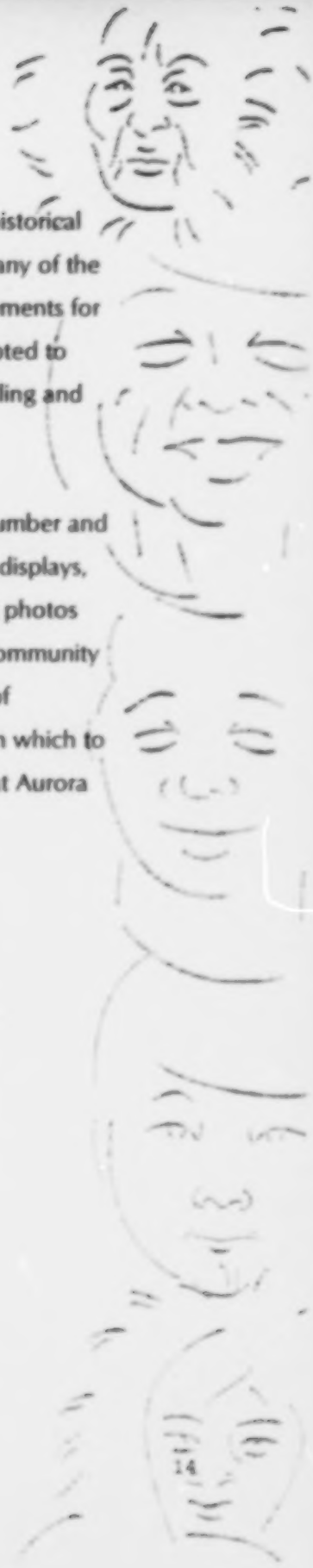
- Restructure the College's Adult Education Certificate program to make it more accessible to First Nations people
- Re-establish the Native Studies program as a major focus for practical implementation of traditional knowledge
- Create a College Fine Arts program that focuses on the skills of contemporary and traditional artisans



facilities

While a substantial number of First Nations drawings and historical artifacts are in evidence throughout the College system, many of the functional aspects of its buildings lack the essential requirements for traditional ceremonies and celebrations. These will be adapted to support implementation of such activities as traditional healing and counselling ceremonies.

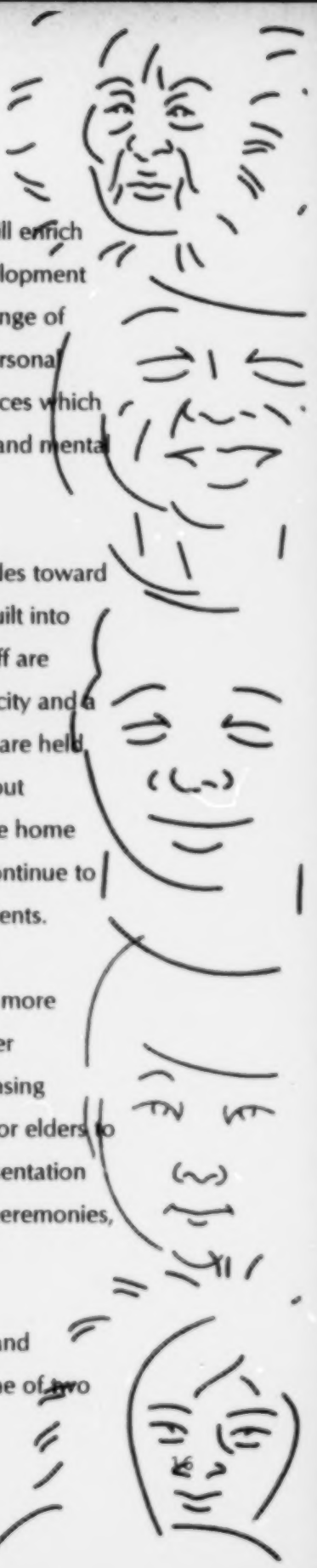
Tradition will be highlighted as the College increases the number and quality of gathering places for cultural activities such as art displays, story telling, painting and drumming. Historical and current photos from the College's Research Institute, student work, and community information will also abound. Consulting with the holders of traditional knowledge to create and adapt physical space in which to practice traditional culture will ensure its prominent place at Aurora College.



facilities initiatives

- Display the culture and history of First Nations people in all College campuses and community learning centers
- Employ First Nations consultants and elders in designing College facilities to accommodate traditional ceremonies
- Display aboriginal art, architecture, spiritual values, and artistic creativity in all College facilities
- Create buildings and environments that are extensions of First Nation students' communities and cultures
- Demonstrate that traditional knowledge has an important place in the College and in the contemporary world
- Establish appropriate healing and counselling facilities

support services



Incorporating traditional knowledge into Aurora College will enrich the cultural base that enhances learning and personal development for First Nation students. The College already provides a range of student services to help students achieve academic and personal goals. These include housing, counselling, and library services which add to the learning environment and to students' physical and mental well being.

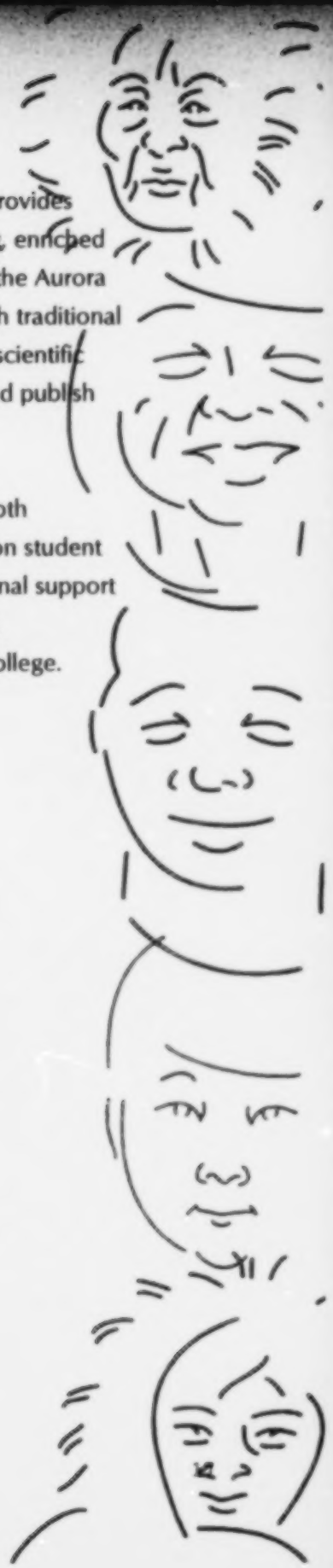
Student services at all campuses have made significant strides toward providing culturally relevant services. Country foods are built into food service contracts. The majority of student services staff are aboriginal. More students are involved in an advisory capacity and a peer support group has been formed. Cultural workshops are held and guest speakers are brought in to speak to students about pertinent issues. Diverse housing facilities provide a positive home environment for students. Staff development workshops continue to be held to improve communication between staff and students.

In addition to these advances, the College will incorporate more aspects of traditional knowledge into therapeutic and career counselling. Opportunities for traditional healing and cleansing practices will be increased. This will include opportunities for elders to share life experiences and stories to promote healing. Presentation topics could include, rights of passage, living on the land, ceremonies, alcohol and drug abuse and medicines.

Traditional Knowledge collections are already established and highlighted at campus libraries. Thebacha Library will be one of two

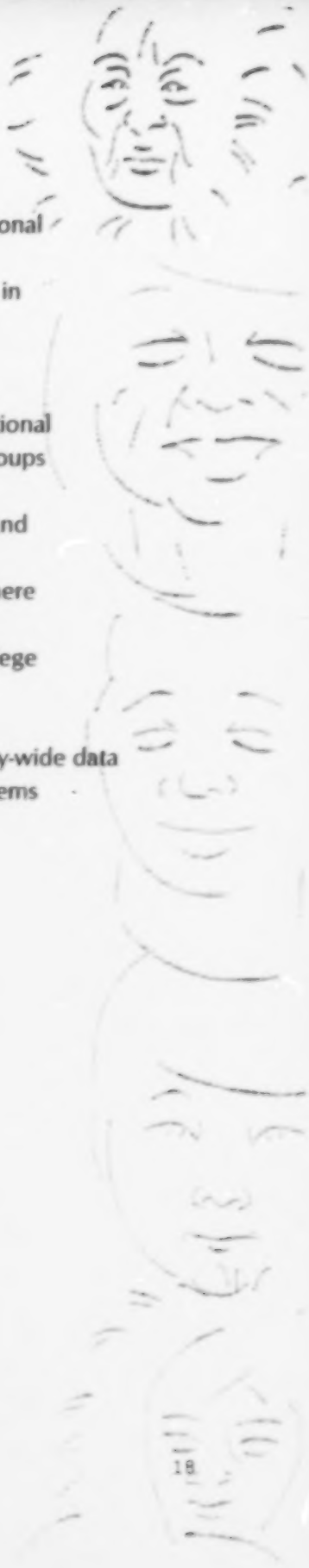
The devolution of College activities to the communities provides significant opportunities for culturally based programming, enriched by the local flavor of traditional knowledge. To that end, the Aurora College library will continue to actively pursue and publish traditional knowledge material. In addition, the College, through its scientific research branch, will make concerted efforts to access and publish research reports and archival material in each region.

The goal is to provide culturally rich student services in both community and Campus based programs. The First Nation student who leaves his or her small community, rich with traditional support systems, should find adequate substitutes within the staff, administration, facilities, services and programs Aurora College.



support services initiatives

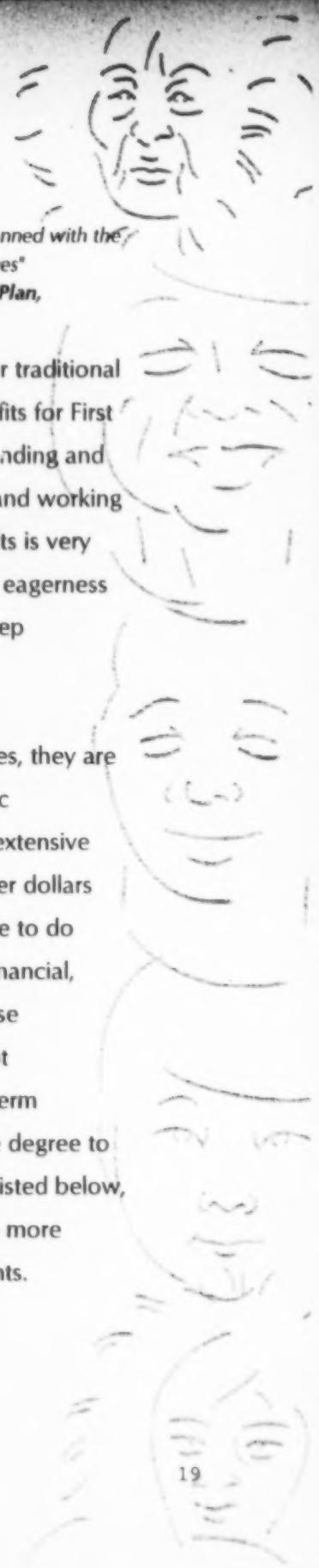
- Enhance the College's library collection of traditional knowledge materials
- Enhance the College's ability to provide services in First Nations languages
- Incorporate traditional healing practices into programs and ceremonies
- Create a forum to facilitate the inclusion of traditional knowledge into student support and wellness groups
- Create for students, a library of materials and information needed to pursue traditional social and cultural activities
- Provide traditional foods at College locations where facilities permit
- Incorporate traditional knowledge into such College ceremonies as graduation and non traditional celebrations
- Incorporate traditional knowledge into a Territory-wide data base shared by cultural institutes and library systems



challenges to be met

"Aurora College recognizes that the allocation of resources must be planned with the clear understanding that we are entering a period of decreasing resources"

Aurora College Corporate Plan,



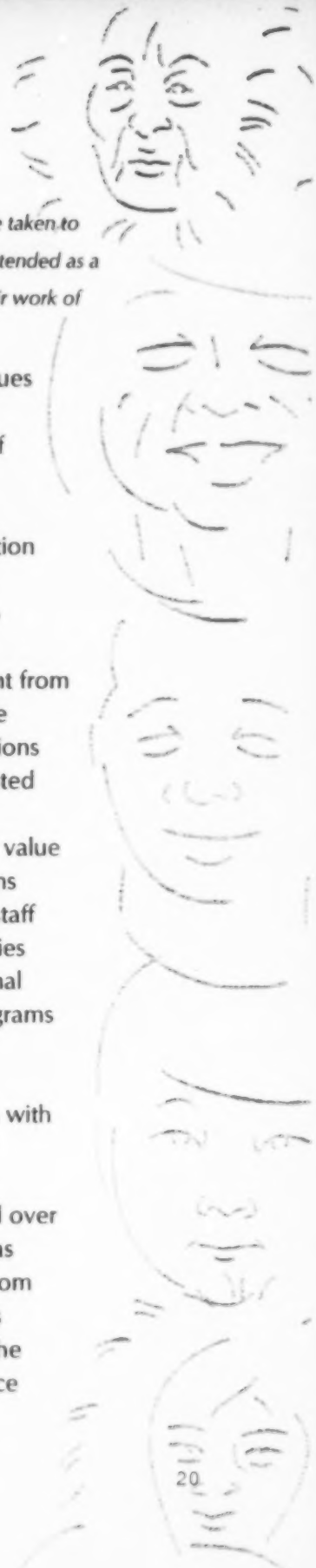
Implementing changes to make a more functional place for traditional knowledge in Aurora College will result in numerous benefits for First Nations students. The College will also benefit as understanding and communications improve with First Nations communities and working groups. The enthusiasm to experience these positive results is very strong and it animates the overall initiative. However, this eagerness must be tempered with a clear understanding of, and a deep commitment to overcome, the difficulties that will arise.

While the challenges are extensive under any circumstances, they are increased and more pervasive due to the current economic restrictions faced by the College. We are facing a time of extensive cutbacks and no matter which goals are set, there are fewer dollars and fewer personnel available to help reach them; we have to do more with less! The following list highlights some of the financial, human resource and logistical challenges to be faced. These challenges are not considered prohibitive and this list is not exhaustive. However, it does dictate a practical and long term approach to ensure success for the original initiatives. The degree to which the College is successful in meeting the challenges listed below, will be an indicator of the degree to which learning will be more personal, meaningful and successful for First Nation students.

meeting the challenges

Earlier in this document, we outlined a series of initiatives that would be taken to incorporate Traditional Knowledge into the College. The following is intended as a general guide for Board members, College managers, and all staff in their work of meeting the challenges we have laid out.

- Clearly define traditional knowledge and the values that underlie it
- Obtain funding to effectively access the range of community sources of traditional knowledge
- Access individuals with the expertise to record, translate, and file traditional knowledge information
- Access individuals who have the expertise to effectively implement traditional knowledge into College programs
- Promote and maintain high levels of commitment from all managers to implement traditional knowledge
- Employ the target numbers of qualified First Nations people so that traditional knowledge is represented by its primary owners
- Educate third party funders on the methods and value of adding traditional knowledge to their programs
- Alleviate any concern or apprehension held by staff about implementing traditional knowledge policies
- Accurately insert the spiritual aspects of traditional knowledge into academic/practical training programs
- Adapt facilities and buildings to accommodate traditional ceremonies and celebrations etc.
- Be proactive, develop effective communications with all individuals, groups and agencies involved in activating traditional knowledge
- Ensure commitment to initial effort is maintained over the long term as the College grows in other areas
- Facilitate the transfer of traditional knowledge from its community level sources to the larger centers
- Ensure that traditional knowledge is integral to the College, not just an "add on" lacking in substance



Traditional knowledge can and should become a key support to the personal and educational aspirations of First Nations people within Aurora College. The key is a thorough implementation process which produces functional results. Precise planning and accurate application will ensure success over the above challenges.

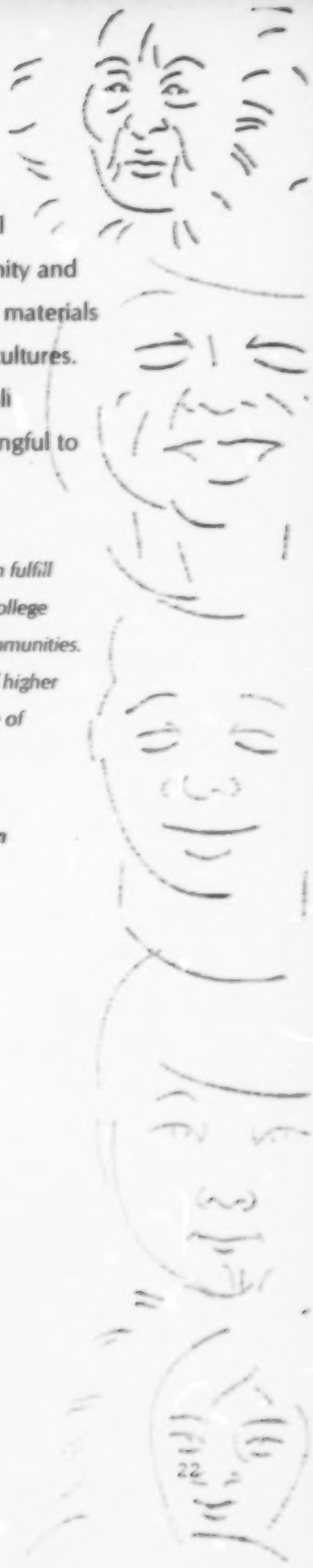
This document was designed to be a practical and efficient framework to guide Aurora College in the important and exciting task of working with First Nations people to increase the use of traditional knowledge in its programs and services.

conclusion

The College recognizes the unique educational needs of all Northerners. We are committed to working at the community and Campus levels to employ those traditional systems, values, materials and information that enhance our learning and corporate cultures. Our goal is to continue to meet the educational needs of all Northerners and provide services that are especially meaningful to First Nations people.

"The College is a learning organization in which all staff and students can fulfill personal and career goals within a supportive corporate culture. The College buildings illustrate a sense of place based on Northern cultures and communities. Aurora College is viewed nationally and internationally as an institute of higher learning that profiles and celebrates the unique cultures and knowledge of Northerners."

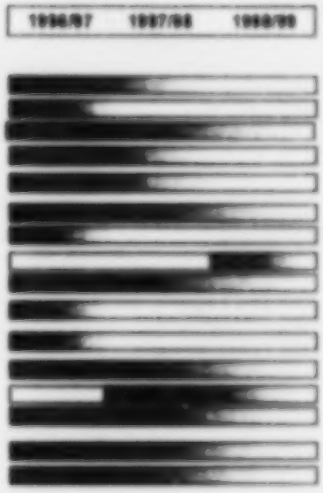
Aurora College, Corporate Plan



Aurora College Implementation Schedule

#1 Administration

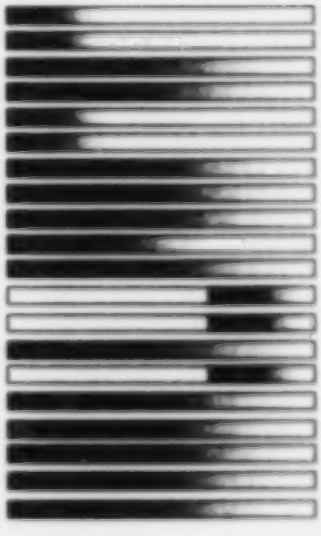
Incorporate TK appropriately into College



- Clarify & include TK values, beliefs and spirituality
- Establish policy to incorporate TK into the College
- Access funding for TK courses and programs
- Implement a framework to ensure consistent TK application
- Enhance alliances with First Nations cultural organizations
- Consult with elders & youth, specify their TK needs
- Establish committee to co-ordinate use of TK
- Enhance technology, transfer TK from communities to larger centers
- Increase number of program deliveries at community level
- Mandate that all employees are responsible for implementing TK
- Establish TK elders council at each College campus
- Recognize outstanding incorporation of TK initiatives
- Negotiate transfer credit for TK programs and courses
- Educate public on potential benefits of TK
- Evaluate and improve TK programs courses and services
- Evaluate success in implementing TK policy

#2 Staff

Continue development of a culturally sensitive and representative staff that understands

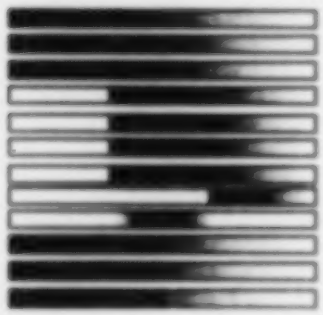


- Develop a clear HR plan
- Rewrite job descriptions
- Professionally develop existing First Nation staff
- Promote First Nation staff to more senior positions
- Create inservice trainee positions
- Create more effective First Nation advertising
- Deliver traditional knowledge workshops
- Promote aboriginal languages in the work place
- Provide opportunities for staff to learn First Nation languages
- Organize cultural camps for all staff
- Help staff incorporate TK in College services and programs
- Provide pay increments for FN second language proficiency
- Create exchange programs in which staff experience TK
- Support cross cultural awareness courses for staff
- Support staff involvement in community healing projects
- Support instructors in the use of culturally appropriate instruction
- Facilitate communication between TK holders and College staff
- Hire staff trained in TK
- Develop and deliver effective TK courses
- Establish ongoing planning partnerships with First Nation groups

#3 Programs

Broaden the scope/ depth of TK application to College programs

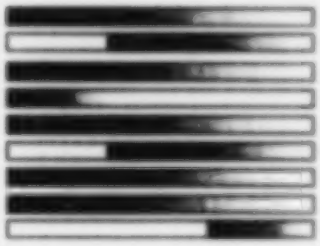
-Research/document ways to develop TK skills and knowledge
-Increase TK in all College deliveries
-Recruit qualified aboriginal instructors who are experienced in TK
-Work with community elders to create TK modules
-Have the Science Institute lead in the development user friendly teaching kits
-Make Adult Ed program more accessable to First Nations people
-Re-establish the Native Studies program as focal point for TK
-Develop a guide book for community based training
-Create a culturally based fine arts program for the College
-Ensure College representation at community traditional celebrations
-Celebrate First Nations traditions in College programs
-Promote third party client use of TK in courses they purchase
-Evaluate the programs' TK initiatives



#4 Services

Use TK to support learning and personal growth in Aurora College

-Enhance the College's collection of TK materials
-Increase the College's deliveries in First Nations languages
-Enhance TK research
-Promote traditional healing practices for students
-Facilitate TK into student support and wellness groups
-Catalogue and make available, materials needed to pursue TK activities
-Provide traditional foods where facilities permit
-Incorporate TK into non-traditional celebrations, (graduations, eg)
-Incorporate TK into a Territorial wide data base
-Evaluate the services TK initiatives



#5 Facilities

Adapt and create facilities wherein TK can be functionally celebrated and displayed

-Display the communities, culture, history of First Nations
-Design / build facilities to accomodate traditional ceremonies
-Display traditional creativity, spiritual values, in all College facilities
-Create extensions of the First Nations community and culture
-Demonstrate importance of TK to the College and to the modern world
-Establish culturally appropriate healing and counselling facilities
-Evaluate the facilities TK initiatives